

# PRACTICAL PEDAGOGY *in the* SUNDAY SCHOOL

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A. H. MC KINNEY



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Practical pedagogy in the  
Sunday school





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in the Sunday School

**By A. H. McKinney, Ph.D.**

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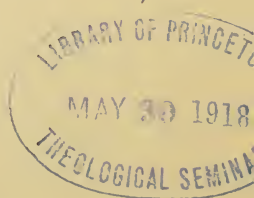
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# Practical Pedagogy in the Sunday School

✓ By  
A. H. MCKINNEY, PH. D.



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## Introduction

**T**HE function of the Sunday-school is to impart instruction for the purpose of leading to definite results. As the result of that instruction, there are many things done in the Sunday-school auxiliary to its chief function. Whenever any of them has a tendency to destroy or nullify the real work of the school, it is out of place. Since, then, the prime object of the Sunday-school is to impart instruction, pedagogy should have a very important place in the thought of the leaders therein, for, to put it concisely, it is the science and art of teaching.

There can be no difference between the pedagogy necessary for the Sunday-school and that for the day-school. There is but one pedagogy ; its applications are

various. It may be applied, for example, to the work of the kindergarten, or to the post-graduate course of a university. It should have a very important place in the Sunday-school; perhaps at the present time more than ever before, because so much depends on the proper teaching of Christian truth. While this is true, some fears that have been expressed by consecrated Sunday-school teachers must be labelled as groundless.

“The introduction of pedagogy into our Sunday-school work will interfere with the position that the Bible now holds.” This is the thought of many. It is, however, entirely erroneous, for the true teaching of the Bible must be in harmony with the principles of pedagogy, as both have the same author. Further than this, the Bible itself abounds with illustrations of pedagogical principles. It is acknowledged by all thoughtful persons that Jesus of Nazareth was the

greatest teacher that ever lived. While He enunciated no pedagogical principles, His treatment of individuals, and especially His conversations with them, show that He was the master of pedagogy, and that He put into operation many of the pedagogical principles which have, in recent years, been advocated by advanced teachers. Surely the disciple needs to follow his Master. The true thought is: The truths of the Bible may be taught along pedagogical lines much more effectively than along lines opposed to the make-up of the minds of those for whom those truths are intended. Every Sunday-school teacher should memorize the command of the great apostle: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."

"Shall we not dishonour the Holy

Spirit?" is a question asked by many excellent teachers, when confronted with the thought of applying pedagogical principles in the teaching of the truths of the Bible. The answer is: No, God will honour His own laws wherever they are followed. One does not dishonour the Holy Spirit in giving heed to the law of gravitation. One does not dishonour the Holy Spirit in becoming acquainted with the laws which govern the working of the human mind, and adapting his teachings thereto. "God does not need your learning," said an illiterate man to a cultured one. "Nor does He need your ignorance," was the reply. It is true that God can use any kind of instrument. Is it not true, also, that He can use an agent prepared for service? Will He not be able to use the one working in harmony with the laws of the mind better than the one who disregards them? The Holy Spirit led many members of the Sunday-

school to Christ and into Christian living before pedagogy was talked of as a necessary aid to the Sunday-school teacher. Why should not the Holy Spirit lead many more to Christ and Christian living through the instrumentality of those who are workmen prepared for His service?

"I have no time to study pedagogy," is the final retort of many, when pressed on this matter. The answer to this is: If the time now spent by the average teacher in wrong methods of study in preparing for class work were expended in the effort to grasp and apply true pedagogical principles, nothing further would be required. In other words, what we are pleading for is not that one shall add to one's burdens as a teacher, but that he shall be familiar with principles of preparation and presentation of truth. When these principles are grasped and applied, the work becomes much

easier and the time necessary for the preparation of a given lesson gradually shortened. For example, thousands of teachers have no adequate conception of how to prepare a lesson. Trusting to something, some of them call it inspiration, others luck, they go to the class with a certain amount of undigested material and present it in some way or other, many of them breathing a sigh of relief when the time for closing the class study arrives. Supposing such persons were to learn how to prepare their lesson, what would be gained? Again, how many of our teachers know how to ask questions? Supposing they were to learn how, what would be the result? A most important part of lesson presentation is the illustration. How many teachers regret that they do not know how properly to illustrate a lesson? These are but a few of the questions that might be asked in the endeavour to show that pedagogy, in-

stead of requiring more time, really takes less than that used by teachers who follow slipshod methods.

In the science of pedagogy there are a few things that are fundamental ; when they are grasped, others may be added and, thus, by degrees, one who is really determined to master them, may do so with an expenditure of very little time and thought. Out of the science of pedagogy comes the art of teaching. This, of course, is acquired like any other art, by practicing those things which the science declares to be right and proper. Unconsciously, many of our teachers do manifest great art in teaching, because they have, by experiment, found what are the best ways of presenting a lesson. Their number might be greatly increased.

A. H. MCK.

*New York.*





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# Practical Pedagogy in the Sunday School

## I

### SOME PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

**A**S the result of the study of the human mind, coupled with careful experiments in the best methods of presenting facts and truths, there have been evolved pedagogical principles which may be said to lie at the basis of the science of pedagogy. From these principles rules may be formulated. It is better to grasp principles and endeavour to follow them than simply to learn rules and endeavour to apply them. We, therefore, suggest four of the great pedagogical principles with which every teacher should be familiar. The time spent in the consideration of these principles will yield much greater fruitage

than if it were devoted to the memorizing of certain rules. The rules may come afterwards.

1. *The principle of adaptation.* It was once suggested that the proper way to study the Bible is for the whole congregation to gather like a great family and have Biblical truths presented to them in a mass. Concerning this, the query was raised: "What would you think of a family class in arithmetic; the grandfather, the children, and the grandchildren all being engaged in the same study?" "Ridiculous," was the answer. Just so it is concerning the Bible. It is true that its truths are necessary, but it is equally true that all truths are not necessary for the same person at the same time. The mature individual of threescore years and ten requires a very different truth from that needed by the beginner who has just entered the Sunday-school. When that beginner has

become an adolescent, that which was suitable for him once must now be superseded by something else. Moreover, different classes of persons of about the same age need different forms of truth. For example, a class composed of cultured, spiritual men should have an entirely different presentation of truth from that given to a class composed of uneducated, unconverted persons. Hence, the first great pedagogical principle to be observed is that of adaptation. The truth should be adapted to the individual for whom it is intended. The teacher who follows this principle may expect fruitage.

2. *The principle of apperception.* So much has been said concerning this vital principle that there are thousands who will have none of it, the reason probably being that they have misconceived its value. Instead of getting into discussions concerning the meaning of the word, and indulging in abstractions as to

the principle, let us say with Dr. Gregory, "The truth to be taught must be learned through truth already known." This, every thoughtful teacher must grant. When he does so, it is equivalent to his declaring that the principle of apperception must be observed in teaching. He who once grasps and then lives up to the truth that it is impossible for the individual to learn anything except through that which he already knows, has made a great advance both in the preparation and the presentation of these truths which we wish to influence the life of our pupils. How this principle of apperception may be applied in our teaching will be explained in chapter three.

3. *The principle of correlation.* Various names have been given to this principle, one of the most common of which is "the principle of association." It means that in teaching, ideas, facts or truths must be associated. Correlation has been

defined as "the act or process of putting a number of truths or facts in proper relation to the truth or fact to be learned."

The teacher who understands and applies this principle will save himself much nervous energy and will find that he can teach more in less time than the one who is ignorant of it.

4. *The principle of concentration.* It is admitted on all sides that one of the weaknesses of Sunday-school teaching is that so many truths are taught from a given Scripture selection that the effect of the whole is largely dissipated, so that very little remains definitely in the minds of those instructed. The application of the principle of concentration would lead the teacher to endeavour to prepare and to present the lesson for a given Sunday, so that one truth would be so lodged in the minds of the pupils that it could be made use of in further teaching and would affect the every-day living of those

to whom it had been given. The presentation and impression of this truth would not prevent the consideration of other truths, but this consideration would be auxiliary or subsidiary to the impression of the one great truth which the teacher wishes to make prominent.

In connection with these basal principles, the fact that many of our pupils imitate what the teacher does rather than obey what he says, should have great weight. From the pedagogical standpoint, there is little value in the Sunday-school teacher's words unless they are backed up with his life. Hence, in preparing his lesson as well as in presenting it, the wise teacher remembers that he is creating a deeper impression by himself than by his words. He will, therefore, ever be on the alert to bring to his aid all such qualities of mind and heart as well as all such outward manifestations of his real self as will help impress



the truth. Therefore, pedagogically, the teacher must be impressed with the truth which he is to teach before he can hope to be the agent for impressing that truth on others.

It needs no psychological or pedagogical knowledge to be able to take the foregoing suggestions and think over them so often that they become a part of one's self. When this is done, everything that is heard or read concerning the various principles referred to will be put into its proper place in the mind of the one who wishes to become a more successful teacher. If to this is added a mental review of the teaching of every lesson in order to ascertain wherein the principles were followed and wherein they were neglected, by degrees the instructor will come to follow the very best that pedagogy has to offer.

## II

### THE PRINCIPLE OF ADAPTATION

**I**T is a common experience on the part of those who examine persons for church-membership, that young people have very vague and indefinite ideas concerning important Biblical facts and truths. Perhaps one reason for this is that those who have instructed them have talked on general principles rather than endeavoured to adapt truth to individuals. If teachers would apply the principle of adaptation, which simply means giving each pupil, so far as possible, that truth which he most needs in the way in which he can most easily receive it, the sum of the knowledge of those instructed will be wonderfully increased.

That individuals differ, and that different individuals need different truths, there

can be no question. Here, for example, are two little girls in a primary department. One of them is well instructed in spiritual things, and needs but a little gentle drawing in the direction in which she is faced in order to bring her into vital contact with Jesus. Her seatmate, however, may be drawn in the direction in which she is facing and led away from Christ. In other words, their needs are different; the teacher who fails to appreciate this is not doing them justice.

Here are two boys sitting side by side in a junior department. One of them is a glib liar. He would as soon tell an untruth as to eat candy. His seatmate, on the contrary, would bite his tongue before he would utter a lie. There is no need of argument to prove that these two boys need different teaching. One should be led to see the necessity of truthfulness; the other should be encouraged in his love of truth-telling.

These illustrations emphasize a difficulty which the ordinary Sunday-school teacher is obliged to face, namely, his pupils vary so that it is not easy to select truths applicable to all. While this difficulty cannot be overcome, there are a few hints that may be helpful to the wide-awake instructor.

1. Above all, the teacher must know those whom he is endeavouring to instruct; know them not merely as they sit before him on the Lord's day, but as they are at home, on the street and in school on week days. He must know the real boys and girls, not the substitutes therefor who may be before him on Sunday.

2. The teacher must know his lesson; not in a general way, but in its particulars, so that he may select therefrom the truth most needed by the majority of his class.

3. By patient study and persevering practice, the teacher must learn how to

apply the truths of a particular lesson to the largest number in his class. Even when he does this, the difficulties referred to in the foregoing will confront him, and this general application must be supplemented at times by special instruction.

The results of modern investigations in paidology and adolescence should be of great help to the teacher in determining how to apply the principle of adaptation. Take, for example, the little beginners. We have learned that they cannot listen long to a set discourse, but that they are very sensitive to suggestion. Therefore, the wise teacher instructs them, not by lecturing them, but by suggesting the truth he wishes them to receive.

The members of a primary department have very vivid imaginations. The effective teacher can get his little pupils to imagine almost anything. Hence he

adapts the truth to their needs by making use of this characteristic. Wonderful are the facts narrated by skillful teachers as to what they have been enabled to accomplish by appealing to the imaginative faculty of their young learners.

Advancing one step farther, we come to the junior department. We have learned that the members of this section of the Sunday-school are literalists. It is no use appealing to their imagination. They must have literal facts. Hence the truth they need may be applied by teaching them facts.

In the early adolescent period, doubt is rampant ; hence the efficient teacher, instead of giving bald facts, presents the truth to be learned as it has been incarnated in persons who have done things.

Dogmatic teaching, as well as arguing, produces no effect upon the young doubters. They will, however, admire those who have done things, and be led

to resolve to emulate them. The knowledge of this one fact gives the alert teacher a tremendous leverage in applying the principle of adaptation.

As the adolescent gets older and comes to about his seventeenth or eighteenth year, he is longing for the practical; hence the truth may be adapted to his needs by giving it to him in a practical rather than in a theoretical form.

When he is a little older, he will be mightily interested in social events, and can be appealed to along his social life. For example, the social teachings of Jesus may be presented to him so that he will see their value and be led to follow the example of Him who went about doing good.

These are but a few hints of what may be done, but they are valuable in that they indicate the necessity of variety in presenting the same truth to different persons.

### III

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF APPERCEPTION

**F**OLLOWING naturally the principle of adaptation comes that of apperception. The teacher who is working for results, in connection with each lesson, asks himself, seriously, What truth of this lesson do my pupils most need? In answering the question, he endeavours to apply the principle of adaptation. He then asks, How am I to get my pupils to appreciate and receive this needed truth? In general terms he gives the answer: Through applying the principle of apperception.

Many good persons have stumbled over the application of this most important principle, because they have made difficult and complex that which is really



easy and simple, if rightly understood. Many other persons who pay no attention to formal pedagogy apply this principle, for its application is really essential to all effective teaching.

What, then, is apperception? It has been defined as "the act or process of adding a new idea, or a series of new ideas to an old one." Dr. Gregory very concisely and forcibly sums up the principle in his declaration: "The truth to be taught must be learned through truth already known." The numerous exhortations to "find the point of contact in teaching," and the means given as to the use to be made of it, are all applicable to the principle of apperception.

Perhaps more helpful than anything else will be an illustration, showing how this principle is applied. "God is love" is an abstract truth, difficult of comprehension by the child mind. Mother's love is no abstraction, for it is in active opera-

tion for the child, hourly. The little child knows that mother loves ; he knows what mother does. Hence, in order to teach God's love, it would be better to begin with the mother than with God. Because the child understands his mother's love, he may be led to appreciate God's love. In other words, through what the child already knows concerning the love of his mother, he may be led to understand something of God's love for him.

In the application of this principle, the old pedagogical maxim : " Proceed from the known to the unknown," should ever be borne in mind. In the first place, the teacher must endeavour to stand on the plane of the child's knowledge and experience and, in the effort to get him to understand the truth, must proceed from that standpoint rather than from the place which the instructor occupies in thought and experience.

If there be any doubt as to where the child is standing in reference to a given truth to be taught, the first thing to be done is to question him in order to ascertain what he knows about the matter to be placed before him.

As, however, all teachers are supposed to be familiar with the thought of their pupils, in ordinary cases time need not be consumed in this questioning process. The necessity for knowing the child's view-point, however, emphasizes the oft-repeated exhortation for the teacher to become familiar with his pupils in their every-day language, and to know not only their ordinary talk, but also their lines of thought.

Perhaps the very best way to apply the principle of apperception is for the teacher to begin the lesson to be taught with a story concerning something which is perfectly familiar to the child, the truth of which the child will recognize, and the

application of which he will make without any aid from the teacher. With this story as the starting point, the efficient instructor will be able to lead the pupil on to appreciate the truth which he wishes him to apprehend and practice.

One caution, however, must be given: Do not proceed too rapidly, nor by jumps. Let the ascent from the pupil's plane of knowledge to the truth to be apprehended be gradual and by easy stages. The pupil will then follow the teacher, will be interested in what is being taught, and will be able to see the force of the truth. Unless the child does see mentally what the teacher wishes him to apprehend, the teaching is in vain. "Do you see it?" is not a superfluous question in teaching truth.

Right here comes in the value of the review. The wide-awake teacher may ascertain how far the truth has been grasped by questioning the pupils on

what has already been gone over. The writer once addressed some children, and was very much encouraged by the actions of a little fellow sitting in front of him, who nodded vigorously when the speaker said that he was going to tell of a certain man, and wished the children either to tell their parents his name, or tell the story and find from them his name. The speaker went on to narrate the story of the conversion of Paul, and the little fellow showed by smile and gesture that he appreciated what was going on. A kindergartner, who sat beside him, was not so sure that he took the thing in. So she said :

“Freddie, for what are you nodding your head?”

“Because I know who that man is talking about.”

“You do?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

“About whom is he talking?”

“George Washington,” came the prompt and emphatic answer, showing that the little fellow had missed the point entirely, and also indicating how valuable the review is.

To ascertain how Jesus applied this principle of apperception, the teacher should read and reread the account of the Master's interview with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Here the great Teacher got the ignorant woman to understand that He was the Messiah, but He began by talking to her about the water, with which she was familiar, and in which she was so much interested. Then, step by step, He led her to an appreciation of the great truth He wished her to learn, so that she went to her neighbours and said, “Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?”

#### IV

### THE PRINCIPLE OF CORRELATION

A REFERENCE made to the principle of correlation in the presence of a group of day-school teachers drew forth expressive smiles. An explanation being asked as to the reason for the smiling elicited the declaration: "We are tired of hearing about correlation." This led to further questions and answers, the result of which may be summed up as follows: The application of the principle of correlation has been carried to such extremes, and so many absurdities have been attached to the principle itself, that many teachers do not wish to hear anything about it. For example, a young student in a normal class once had her notes on a certain subject marked way down because, as

she was told, the colour scheme on the cover of her note-book was not correlated to the subject matter of the lectures. She was naturally indignant, and when she related her experience to her fellow students, some of them recalled incidents equally foolish.

It is these absurdities that bring a good thing into disrepute. The Sunday-school teacher need not go to such extremes. He ought to bear in mind that correlation may be said to be "The act or process of putting a number of truths or facts in proper relation to a truth or fact to be learned." Applying this definition, the day-school teacher, or the college professor, would endeavour to bring various subjects already learned by the student to bear upon the particular truth or fact he is about to teach. For example, history and geography may be correlated so that the pupil will be helped in the study of one by what he



knows about the other. As the student advances and begins the study of foreign languages, what he knows of history and geography becomes useful in connection with his study of language. So in regard to literature, law, ethics, philosophy, and many other branches of learning. By correlating the various subjects studied, what the pupil has already learned may be reviewed and impressed in an easy and agreeable manner, and employed as a help in the acquisition of more knowledge.

It is well known that one of the criticisms made against Sunday-school work by educators is that Bible facts and truths are taught by what is known as the "hop-skip-and-jump" method. It must be confessed that there is much truth in this criticism. At the same time, however, the teacher who understands and endeavours to apply the principle of correlation may do much to disarm such

criticism. The day is here in some schools, and is doubtless coming in most schools, when there will be a supplemental scheme of study—simple, clear, comprehensive—which will serve as an outline for the work of the Sunday-school, and to which the teacher may correlate what the pupil learns as the weeks go by. For example, why should there not be in the mind of every Sunday-school pupil of average intelligence a simple outline of Old Testament history, that should be the point from which the teacher starts in his instruction concerning any given Biblical fact or teaching, and to which he constantly returns? Again, why should there not be memorized by the ordinary Sunday-school member an outline of the life of Christ, and another outline of the work of the apostles? With these simple outlines in view, every lesson that is taught can be correlated with truth already in the mind

of the learner. More than this, facts, incidents and truths may be correlated so that there will be a continually increasing amount of information on Biblical subjects mastered, instead of the great mass of undigested, unassimilated material that eludes the grasp of the average Bible student of to-day.

Take the great hymns that we study ; why should they not be correlated with the Scriptural incidents upon which many of them are founded ? When, for example, the teacher is having his pupils memorize, or even sing, " Nearer, My God, to Thee," why should he not correlate that with the story of Jacob on which it is founded ?

Perhaps a few hints will be helpful to the teacher who wishes to make use of the principle of correlation.

1. Have clearly in mind some things that are essential to the understanding of the sweep of Bible history.

2. Teach these in outline form, as has been suggested in the foregoing.

3. Whenever a lesson is being studied, correlate it with as much as possible of the outline to which it belongs.

4. Correlate the lesson of to-day with what has already been learned about the Bible in general.

5. Correlate the pupil's Biblical studies with his day-school lessons. For instance, his knowledge of geography and history, and what he is learning concerning current events, all may be made use of in impressing Scripture facts and truths.

6. In the application of this principle keep in mind the great value of the review, which need not be very elaborate, but which should always be by questions in connection with everything taught.

What will be the result of all this? If definitely and consistently carried out

the application of the principle of correlation will result in enabling the pupil to recall unconsciously and, thus, to review and to impress things that, otherwise, would be forgotten. When he reads, he will fall into the habit of correlating his reading with what he already knows, and so be helped in retaining it. When he listens to a sermon, or lecture, he will be able to put what the speaker is saying into its proper relation with other things he knows.

This will not all come at once, and the less conscious the effort needed in realizing it, the better. Such a system is so far superior to the present plan of teaching isolated facts and truths, and calling what is given Biblical instruction, that it needs only to be presented to the attention of the intelligent teacher to be appreciated.

The skillful day-school teacher obtains remarkable results by applying the prin-

ciple of correlation. For example, he wishes to teach the story of Bunker Hill. He does not tell the pupils to read that story, nor does he narrate it himself. On the contrary he brings into play every power of their intellect and correlates what he teaches with what they already know. He does it somewhat after this fashion, and he does it quickly, for he has but a few moments for this particular study. With a smile as if he were conferring upon them a privilege, he asks, How many of you boys would like to tell me something about Bunker Hill?

What American boy is there, who is normal, who would not like to tell something about Bunker Hill? Hands go up, and the teacher's smile is reflected by the boys. Quickly he calls on one after another to tell what they know concerning the famous battle-ground, while he urges the other boys to be watchful and

note carefully any mistakes that are made and be ready to supply any omissions. So thoroughly does he and the pupils enter into the spirit of the occasion that every one is on the alert; even the most sluggish boy in the room wakes up and has something to say about Bunker Hill.

One suggests that he can point out Bunker Hill on the map. He is allowed to do so, thus correlating the study of history with the study of geography.

Another boy has learned the poem, "The Sword of Bunker Hill," and is permitted to recite a stanza or two, so correlating his history with his memory work and with his English studies.

A pupil has visited Bunker Hill and desires to tell what he saw there. This the teacher allows him to do, and the boy's history work becomes a part of his own life.

Another recalls the fact that in a certain reader there is a story about Bunker

Hill. He is quickly sent to obtain that reader, and on his return is allowed to read the selection. This he considers a great privilege, while the teacher is correlating the boy's reading lesson with the history lesson.

Finally, for the sake of emphasis and reimpression, the teacher retells the story of Bunker Hill, dwelling upon such points as he wishes to be fixed in the minds and worked out in the lives of the pupils.

The principle of correlation may be applied further by the teacher assigning this story of Bunker Hill as the subject of a composition. In this way it is correlated with the language lesson and the writing lesson.

How different this is from the work of the old-fashioned teacher who endeavoured to extract as many truths as possible from a verse of Scripture, and impress them all on the minds of the pupils. The resultant was a nebulous mental



something which was far from any clear-cut knowledge of Scripture.

The day-school teacher who taught the lesson of Bunker Hill had a purpose beyond that of merely leaving facts in the minds of his pupils. He wished to make them patriots. The teaching of the lesson was one of the means to this end. Therefore, although he said nothing about it, running through all his questioning and all his efforts to make real the story of Bunker Hill was the thought that he wished to send his students forth into the world to think, speak and act as patriots. This thought led to the application of the principle of concentration with which the next chapter deals.

## V

### THE PRINCIPLE OF CONCENTRATION

**L**ET us suppose that the thought which the teacher wishes to impress upon the pupils' minds is the Scriptural statement: "God is love," and the expression which he wishes to have of this truth in the lives of the pupils is: "Love manifested for God, because He loves us." The teacher has prepared himself to apply the principle of correlation in presenting this truth, illustrating it from various standpoints, backing it up by Bible texts, and endeavouring, in various ways, to impress it upon the minds of the pupils. There is, however, on their part a tendency to depart from the subject, and discuss other matters. What is the teacher to do?

Here is where he is to apply his principle of concentration.

A teacher's success in the application of this principle will depend, as success in other directions depends, on the preparation he has made, not only for the teaching of this particular truth, but also in his general studies. Giving the pupil as wide a range as possible for his questions, suggestions and objections, the efficient teacher has so prepared his lesson material that he has it not only well digested, but well in mind, so that by the skillful introduction of a pertinent illustration, or a striking question, he can turn the attention of those whom he is trying to lead into the truth to that truth. A little experience will enable him to anticipate the kind of questions his pupils will be likely to ask. With these questions in mind, he will have ready answers for them, which answers will help him to concentrate on the subject under discus-

sion. Moreover, his knowledge of the pupils will enable him to understand at about what points they will become restless, and, as is shown in the chapter on "Attention," he will be able skillfully to interject those things into the lesson which will bring back the wandering thoughts to the point where he wishes to have them fixed.

While it is easy to write these things, the difficulty connected with them is appreciated. Hence, a little more definiteness may be employed in suggesting the particular kinds of preparation necessary to observe the principle of concentration, where the members of the class are likely to be interested in things other than the one discussed.

In the first place, the point to be impressed upon the pupils is the one that should be on the line of their needs, rather than the one the teacher needs. For example, to teach a lot of boys that God

loves them so much that He will give them grace for the dying hour is absurd. On the other hand, to endeavour to show them that God loves them so much that He is interested, not only in their personal salvation, but also in their sports, their studies and their every-day trials and triumphs, is to bring the subject down to the plane where boys are living.

In the second place, after the thought to be impressed has been decided upon, the teacher should marshal his facts, illustrations, suggestions and questions in such a way that however diverse they may seem in scope, they will all really be focused on this one great truth : " God is love."

Again, the teacher, having arranged his material, should put it in some form that will make it available when the result is to be striven for. An outline memorized is far the best, for this plan of preparation enables the teacher to look

the pupils in the eye as he is imparting the truth. As it is impossible for some to memorize in this way, the next best thing is to have an outline on a small piece of paper, so arranged that the eye can readily take in the salient features.

The preparation so far presupposes that there are to be no difficulties in the class, but there will be difficulties. Hence, the teacher should bring into play his knowledge of the pupils in asking himself beforehand what they are likely to say, and what they are likely to do at given points in the lesson presentation, and in preparing to meet whatever may be interposed by the pupils having a tendency to draw the thoughts of the members of the class from the subject under consideration.

The thought of self-mastery is a very important one in this connection. The teacher who wishes to employ, to the advantage of all concerned, the principle

under consideration must be master of himself. In the measure that this is the fact, will he be successful. It is the one who is not quite sure of himself, because he is not quite sure of what he is going to teach, and how he is going to teach it, that is relieved when something occurs to give him or some one else a chance to talk. The masterful teacher, knowing the point at which he is aiming, and the steps by which he is to arrive at that point, is able to allow his pupils to wander a little, having confidence in his ability to draw them back. This, of course, means preparation of the kind suggested here; but it is preparation that is well worth the best effort of any one. At first it will be a little difficult. In this, however, as in all other matters, "Practice makes perfect." That which was hard at first will, by degrees, become easier, and the teacher who is determined to apply the principle of concentration will soon form

those habits of study and instruction that will make it easy for him to do so.

One truth taught on each Sunday of the year is better than fifty-two truths taught on one Sunday, is a declaration which every teacher should consider. Only he who understands and applies the principle of concentration can hope to approximate to the truth of this statement. Hence, while many things may be auxiliary and subsidiary in teaching, the chief endeavour should be to impress one vital truth during each study period.



## VI

### IMITATION

**T**HAT remarkable booklet by Bishop Huntington, entitled "Unconscious Tuition," should not only be read, but its contents should be mastered, by every person who wishes to influence others. After the truths of the book have been made one's own, it should be reread at least every six months, so as to keep its teachings fresh in mind. The argument of the experienced author is: The teacher is unconsciously exerting an influence over the pupil continuously and, therefore, should be very careful that that influence be of the highest. The fact that the young, especially, are prone to imitate, should give added interest on the part of all teachers to the thought of this book.

One has but to watch a group of

young children at play to be convinced that much of what they are doing is in imitation of their elders. The stories that find their way into the funny papers in reference to the ridiculous things children do while acting the part of their parents may be fiction as to detail, but are true as to the great fact that these little ones are imitators. As the pupil becomes older, there is, of course, more and more of originality on his part, especially during the period of early adolescence, when he breaks away from all authority, and is bound by no rule. Giving due consideration to this fact, it must be admitted, however, that all persons are, to a greater or less degree, imitators. As the majority of the members of our Sunday-school are young, it will well repay the teacher to give diligent heed to this trait of his pupils, for it may form a leverage by means of which he can raise them to higher things.

Leaving the general consideration of the subject, it may be of more value to consider some particulars in which the proneness to imitate on the part of the pupil may be used to advantage in the work of the Sunday-school.

1. Order. It is a saying now adopted among Sunday-school experts : "An orderly superintendent makes an orderly school." While there are, of course, exceptions, the principle holds true. The school is often a reflex of the superintendent ; not what he is occasionally, but what he is generally, especially when he is off his guard, or not on parade duty. Recognizing this truth, the superintendent who wishes for order in his school must first of all be orderly. In the second place, instead of scolding or giving commands, he will show his teachers, his workers and the pupils, by his example, just what he wants. What is true of the superintendent may be pred-

icated of the other officers of the school, and of the teachers. Given a school where the officers and teachers work together in harmony, and are in good order as a rule, it will not be difficult to regulate the discipline of the school.

2. Reverence. A noted superintendent of a large primary department had so well learned the power of imitation on her pupils that she produced a remarkable influence upon their lives and conduct by her own manner of doing things. For example, instead of telling them that they must reverence the name of Jesus, she always pronounced that name in such a way that the children instinctively felt that she revered it. Instead of telling them how to regulate their voices when engaged in prayer, she so modulated her tones as to produce a quieting effect upon the little ones. It was not necessary for her to say very much in reference to reverence

for God's Word, for she spoke so tenderly of it, and even handled the book itself so reverently that everybody in the class was impressed with the thought that reverence should be paid to it. This illustration will suffice to show that the best way to inculcate reverence in the Sunday-school is to be reverent one's self.

3. A sermon preached has a certain effect; a sermon lived produces far greater results. Take, for example, the doubting period of early and middle adolescence; it is almost impossible by argument to convince the young doubters concerning certain things. They are, however, all eyes when they see the truth lived. Incarnated in one who preaches it, the effect is powerful. Hence, to get others to believe and to do according to the truths for which the Sunday-school stands, due regard must be paid to this trait of imitation.

The realization of these truths which have such a high pedagogical value should be a means of encouragement for the teacher. There are those who may not be very learned ; there are others who may not be very eloquent ; there are many who regret that their teaching in the class seems to have such little influence upon their pupils ; there is no one, however, who need be cast down, for every one is exerting a potent influence upon those with whom he comes in contact. When the young man said he was converted through his uncle's practicing, he expressed, in a very concise manner, the great principle which we would have all Sunday-school teachers grasp, namely : There is no limit to what may be done because of the trait of imitation.

With these truths in mind, it is not difficult to find the conclusion of the whole matter. The effective teacher, first of all, endeavours to do what he wishes

others to do. Being and doing himself, the spoken word but helps influence the more forcible speaking of his every-day life and action. The oft-quoted expression of Emerson, "What you are speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say," is but a summing up of the truths illustrated in the foregoing. Let us, then, take courage and resolve that with God's help we will make the very highest possible use of the propensity to imitate on the part of our pupils, to lead them into the truth, and to help them live it. As we make this our endeavour, let us not forget that Jesus Christ is our great example, and that if we imitate Him we shall be holding up a model for our pupils of which we need not be ashamed. In the measure that we are influenced by Christ Himself, will we unconsciously lead others to be like Him.

## VII

### CURIOSITY

**M**ANY expert teachers realize the value, pedagogically, of the trait which we commonly call curiosity. This characteristic is especially marked in children of the primary age, but we have ample proof that it is not lacking in children of older growth ; indeed mature adults have been known to be impelled by curiosity. Hence, in all departments of the Sunday-school it may be employed as an ally to the teacher whose endeavour is to impress truth.

Every kindergartner knows how prone her little folks are to tear things in pieces, to break their toys and otherwise demolish what comes before them.



This tendency is not the result of pure wantonness, but of the desire to learn. It is taken advantage of by putting the child to construct rather than to destroy, that is to say, the positive is used to overcome the negative. Hence, we find the children of the kindergarten largely employed in putting things together. This employment not only gives them something to do, but also satisfies their curiosity as in manual work they are getting answers to many of the "whys" that play such a large part in their conversation. Here is a suggestion for teachers of beginners in Sunday-school.

The boy of primary age who dug a big hole in the corner of the garden for no other purpose than that of discovering what was "down there" is a representative of a large class. To this company belongs the other boy who explored his father's watch with a stone and became satisfied that there was something in

there that "made it go." This propensity to discover things is taken advantage of by the primary teacher who knows her pupils. One such carries a black bag in which nearly every Sunday she has an object, picture or something else with which to surprise her pupils.

"Teacher, what have you in your bag to-day?" is a question with which she is frequently greeted. To this she has a ready answer, which tends to whet the curiosity of the questioner, who soon spreads the news throughout the room: "Teacher has something fine to show us to-day." On the Sunday that she wished to impress the fact that evil companions led those associated with them into evil, she had a fine red apple in her bag. For some time the children had no idea of what was coming. At the proper moment the teacher produced the apple and began to talk about it, dwelling particularly on its form and beauty. They

were all alive with interest, when she turned to a spot which had been covered and showed them that it was bruised. It took but little effort to get the children to imagine how the effects of that bruise would spread, and the beautiful apple soon become a mass of decay. Then the gist of what she wished to teach was understood, for this skillful instructor had made use of the God-given trait of curiosity in such a way that she had led on step by step until her little ones fully comprehended the point she endeavoured to make.

How frequently the primary teacher nullifies the advantages of the appeal to curiosity by satisfying it before the proper time! A picture uncovered in view of the pupils is eagerly scanned by them, but becomes useless as an aid in teaching, for their curiosity has led them to look for and take in all that they desired in connection with the picture. Hence

objects, symbols and other aids in instruction should not be exposed to view in such a way that their value is lost because those for whom they are intended get all they can take from them before the teacher begins her lesson.

As we go upward in the graded school we are reimpresed with the fact that curiosity plays an important part in the teaching of the various departments. A junior teacher who plans her devotional services and lesson teaching so that the pupils do not know just what is coming, by little prepared, interesting surprises may keep them on the alert with expectation because she arouses, but does not quite satisfy, their curiosity. If they know just what is coming and can imagine about what teacher is going to say, they will be listless, indifferent and unresponsive.

How frequently do we hear expressions like this from the young adolescent,

"Nothing doing." The alert teacher makes it impossible for his pupils to say this concerning him, for he plans so to surprise his class that they will be led to confess that something is being done all the time. In other words by getting out of ruts and pursuing new paths and by-ways of instruction, he keeps the curiosity of his young people awake and satisfies it just enough to make them want to know what is coming next.

The writer once witnessed what was to him a most satisfactory exhibition of how the curiosity of young women may be used as a pedagogical aid. The class was seated in three double pews at the rear of the auditorium of the church. Standing in front of the rows of well dressed young women was a teacher not much older than her pupils. She had her Bible open in her hand and proceeded to ask questions therefrom and give explanations. Although she fre-

quently looked at the Bible, it seemed as if her eyes were continuously on her class, taking them all in as she glanced along row after row. When she noticed the least tendency to inattention, she quietly leaned over to the pew in front of her and lifted up something in such a way that no one could tell just what it was. Her very action was intended to appeal to the curiosity of the young ladies. It did not take many seconds for every eye to be riveted upon her. Then she showed what was in her hand—a picture illustrating that part of the lesson text on which she was engaged. When the picture was laid down the teacher proceeded with her conversational instruction until she realized that it was time for another appeal. Then the second picture was produced in such a way as to attract the attention of every one. Perhaps six times during the half hour of instruction this method was re-

sorted to with such success that the visitor learned a lesson he has never forgotten. In conversation with one familiar with the methods of this instructor it was ascertained that she never makes an appeal twice in exactly the same way. Every Sunday she has something to excite the curiosity of her pupils, which she satisfies in such a way as to leave an impression of the truth she has to teach.

A most remarkable exhibition of great teaching was witnessed in a class of men, the teacher of which, adroitly, from time to time, appealed to the curiosity of his fellow men. When the investigator asked one of the members of the class why it was that the teacher was so successful, he was informed, "He always keeps us guessing; we never know just what he is going to do; he never does the same thing twice in the same way; every Sunday we know that we are going to get something good, but we do



not know what it is." Here is a man who understands human nature so well, and is willing to make such preparation that he can keep the curiosity of his class on edge week after week. Of course, it would be worse than folly for him to attempt to do this unless he had something to satisfy the aroused curiosity. Much thought, prayer and labour are expended by him in preparing to meet the curiosity which he knows keeps his pupils wondering what he is going to do next.

"Look at this," said a man on the platform to the large school that he was about to review on the lesson of the day. As he uttered the exclamation he held a piece of chalk lightly against the blackboard and stood with his back to the school. In less time than it takes to narrate it, nearly every eye was turned towards his hand, and every one was waiting expectantly to see what he would do. In other words he had



aroused the curiosity of the whole school by a simple exclamation and the movement of his hand containing the piece of chalk. Turning from the board he said, "Thank you; I wanted you to look at me." The members of the school smiled and good-humouredly took part in the review. This is what curiosity does when it is properly appealed to. One great difficulty connected with the use of this characteristic is: No formula can be given nor rules laid down. The alert, intelligent instructor, who is fully conscious of the power that lies in the appeal to curiosity, will devise his own methods in accordance with the age of his pupils and the circumstances under which he labours.

## VIII

### LESSON PREPARATION

“GIVE me two or three good stories with which to begin my lesson, and I will get through somehow.” This was the sentiment unexpressed or uttered by many so-called teachers in the olden time. Perhaps their species is not yet extinct. Many teachers come to the superintendent and say, “I can get along all right while I am telling my story, but just as soon as I come to the practical application of the lesson, my pupils do not pay any attention.”

To-day, among the most intelligent teachers, little regard is paid to the beginning of the lesson, except as it bears on the conclusion thereof. This is a generally accepted axiom: *The last few*

*minutes of the lesson period are the most important!* Hence, in all preparation, the thought should be: How shall I conclude this lesson? In fact, the very best teachers look much farther than the conclusion of the lesson period, and aim for the expression of the truth of the lesson in the life of the pupil, for it is realized that that teaching amounts to very little, which does not affect the life of the one instructed. Hence, from the moment of beginning the preparation for teaching, how to get the living expression of the truth to be taught, is the question that requires the greatest thought. (See chapter fourteen.)

Another mistake, formerly made by teachers, was the endeavour to attempt to get too much into the lesson period. A great mass of facts and truths was presented to the pupils, with the result that they took from the class only a hazy, nebulous aggregation of ideas, without

anything crystallized in their minds. It is no wonder that such teaching resulted in ignorance of Bible truths. Now, the thought is : One principal truth for each lesson should be impressed upon the mind of the pupil, for the purpose of having him give expression to it in his daily life.

This leads to the consideration of the most important question in lesson preparation, namely : How am I to impress upon my pupil's mind the truth which I wish him to express in his daily living ? For the teacher in the secular school or college, there is a variety of methods open, according to which he may make his impression upon the minds of his students. For the Sunday-school teacher, however, the material is limited ; it has been selected for him in the form of a certain definite Scripture text, which is put into his hand without any choice of his own, and which, he is told, forms the basis of

the lesson for the day. A very important question, then, is: What shall I do with the lesson text assigned me? There is an old principle, as applicable in study as it is in warfare, namely: "Divide and conquer."

The teacher who makes the proper kind of lesson preparation first of all masters the text he expects to present. The very best method of mastering it is so to divide it that an outline of it may be memorized and retained in the mind. Hence, any given portion of Scripture which is to be presented as a lesson should be divided into three or four sections, which the instructor can present in order. For most inexperienced teachers, the making of this division will be very difficult. Therefore, at first, they must take the outlines made for them by others in the lesson quarterly or monthly. By degrees, however, they will make their own division, which is much better

than one ready made. This outline should be short and simple, should be memorized, and should be thought over much during the week. In making it, the teacher should bear in mind the fact that the lesson to be presented is for the pupil, and not for the instructor.

After the outline has been made, the teacher should read as much as possible on the lesson. This is reversing the usual process. Ordinarily, the teacher reads and then attempts to get from the mass of reading something suitable. This method, of course, is better than none, but it is a great waste of time. It is readily seen that after the teacher has decided on the one great truth to be impressed, and has made an outline of his teaching material, whatever he reads may be put into its proper place, and be the means of reënforcing an impression of what is to be taught. In fact, a teacher cannot be too well read on the lesson.

The danger that we wish to warn against is that kind of promiscuous reading which results in mental dyspepsia, rather than in clearness of thought and impressiveness of presentation.

One value of the varied reading by the instructor will be that he will be ready for those emergencies which are liable to arise in any class. When the teacher has made his outline and is endeavouring to present it, he need not think he is going to have clear sailing, for there will be some who will interrupt, even though the objection be manifested merely by looks. For such he should be prepared; his reading helps in this preparation.

Now, as to the story. It may be told at the beginning, as an approach, to prepare the minds of the pupils for the conclusion. It should be in entire harmony with, and have a very direct bearing upon this conclusion. Other stories may

be narrated to illustrate the lesson text, and to impress the truth which the teacher is endeavouring to have the pupils grasp. Ordinarily, a short story, forcibly presenting the truth with which the teacher wishes to close, will be very effective. It is told, however, for the sake of the truth, and not for the sake of the illustration. In other words, the old architectural principle: "Ornament constructions; do not construct ornaments," is applicable here, as elsewhere.



## IX

### ILLUSTRATING THE LESSON

**W**HEN thinking of illustrations the guiding principle to be borne in mind is this: Illustrations are for the purpose of making clear and impressive the lesson truth. An illustration should never be told for its own sake; nor should a truth be tacked on to an illustration. The teacher should determine what truth he wishes to impress, and select his illustrations accordingly. The very best illustrations for the Sunday-school teacher are found in the Bible itself; hence, a familiarity with the Book is essential for good teaching. Next to this, the teacher living in the country will get his illustrations from nature, where the Master Himself found so many of those which He employed so

impressively. Perhaps the illustrations that tell most are those related to the every-day life of the individuals for whom they are intended. If a teacher can begin a lesson by saying, "Last Tuesday, at such and such a place, I saw such and such a thing," the very fact that the time is near and the place familiar will attract attention and help create that interest which is so essential to true teaching. Newspapers and magazines furnish many illustrations. From ordinary conversation, the teacher who is on the lookout will derive much that will be of great value in illustration.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty the ordinary person finds in regard to illustrations is to have them at hand when needed. A story is indefinitely floating in the mind. "Where did I see it?" "How can I get it?" are questions asked. Much time is wasted in wondering what has become of that which

would be so "pat" for the present lesson. To avoid this condition of affairs, the very best apparatus for the teacher is a box in which are a number of blank cards. On these cards should be pasted short illustrations, arranged in alphabetical order, which can be found without any difficulty. In case the illustration is in a book, or magazine that cannot be cut, a reference may be made to it on the card and put in its proper alphabetical position, available for the time of need.

All illustrations, however, are not those which appeal to the ear only. A large mass of material, such as pictures, objects and symbols, may be used for illustrative purposes. These should be kept in a receptacle especially set apart for the purpose.

A few suggestions may be offered in regard to the use of illustrations :

1. They should be on the plane of

the learner's experience. An illustration should not be so simple as to excite the contempt of the learner. It should not be so far above him that he fails to grasp the point illustrated.

2. The illustration should be such that the teacher need have no fear that it obscures the truth to be impressed. It frequently happens that the illustration is remembered, and the truth is forgotten. This should not be so.

3. Too many illustrations should not be used in connection with the impression of any truth. This is a mistake made by some, whose skill in gathering illustrations is not equalled by their power in impressing truth. Better one or two striking illustrations that will remain in the mind of the learner and recall the truth to be expressed in his life, than a number which are simply remembered as illustrations.

4. The same illustrations should not

be used too frequently, nor to impress too many truths. Where this is done there is a confusion in the mind of the learner, instead of that clearness for which we are all aiming.

A safe practice would be to begin the lesson with an illustration drawn from the every-day experience of the pupil, to attract his attention on the one hand, and to impress the truth which the teacher wishes to leave in his mind on the other hand. This illustration, given in simple language and concise form, may be referred to throughout the teaching period, for the purpose of showing its bearing on the truth taught, or the relation of the truth to the illustration.

The conclusion of the lesson might be in the form of another illustration, tending to impress what was suggested by the opening illustration. In other words, when the pupil recalls the illustrations given at the important points of the

lesson study—the beginning and the ending—the truth learned should be recalled by those illustrations.

The use of illustrations aside from these two should be sparingly indulged in, for the reason that a lesson that is too profusely illustrated fails of its mark.

## X

### THE ART OF QUESTIONING

**T**HERE are at least two essential prerequisites for questioning so as to get answers. The most important, but, perhaps, one that is generally overlooked, is knowledge of the pupils. It is impossible so to frame questions as to expect intelligent answers unless the questioner has a knowledge of those questioned. Hence, what has been said and written concerning the necessity of studying the individual members of the class has a very important bearing on the subject before us. The other essential is a knowledge of the lesson to be taught. The teacher may have made a simple outline, and have determined to teach very few things, but his questioning power will be increased in the ratio that he has a masterful knowledge of the

lesson. To this, of course, should be added a general knowledge of the Bible, for each lesson taught is but a part of the great system which we are endeavouring to make clear to our pupils.

In considering the basis of proper questioning, the one who proposes asking questions should first of all ask himself, What is my object in asking questions? He who questions in order to show his own smartness, or to disclose his pupils' ignorance, is not worthy of consideration. The true teacher, working along pedagogical lines, endeavours to frame his questions so as to reveal his pupils' knowledge. When a person has been asked a question, the answer to which he can readily give, he is thereby inspired to try to answer other questions. The moment he begins to suspect that the questioner is endeavouring to disclose how little is known of the subject, the one questioned will shut up, and refuse



to answer even those questions which are easy, for he fears that other and more embarrassing questions will soon be asked.

Another object in asking questions is to stimulate thought. Questions may be put suggestively, which do not tend to expose the ignorance of the one questioned, but which do help him to think. For this reason, as a rule, questions that can be answered by "Yes" or "No" are not considered correct from the pedagogical standpoint. It is very easy to ask such questions, but in the endeavour to help the pupils, the easiest is often the worst thing that could be done.

Occasionally, questions may be asked to arouse the conscience of the learner. The great Teacher, Jesus, was an adept in asking such questions. He put them in such a way that an answer to them would bring the conscience into play. For example, "What doth it profit a

man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? "

Again, questions may be asked to impress the truth taught. Frequently, that which has been taught a pupil may be impressed on his mind by the teacher questioning upon it. The very act of recalling it and answering the question helps the impression. Dr. Gregory, in his "Seven Laws of Teaching," says: "The completion, test and confirmation of teaching must be made by reviews." These reviews are of all the more value if they are in the form of questions.

A little practice will enable the average teacher to ask questions that will reveal the pupil's knowledge, stimulate his thought, arouse his conscience and impress the truth.

In the first place, questions should be clear and simple; that is, easily understood, and susceptible of but one answer. To ask a school this question: "Where

is to-day's lesson found?" is to invite from the members a number of correct answers. To ask, "In what book of the Bible is our lesson found?" is to call forth one answer that is correct.

In order to accomplish the object suggested above, a question should be short. Better ask five or six short questions to draw out the answer desired, than to ask one long one that is not easily carried in the mind. A great preacher once undertook to conduct the platform review in his Sunday-school. Sunday by Sunday his irritation increased, as he found that he could not get his teachers or pupils to answer questions. A consultation among the teachers themselves, unknown to the good man, resulted in their declaring that the reason why the school did not respond was because his questions were too long. He was told of this fact, but indignantly denied its truth. Shortly after this, one of the officers of the school,

who had deliberately set himself to prove that the pastor's questions were too long, counted a question asked the school, and it numbered exactly two hundred and twenty-two words. Is it any wonder that the great preacher failed as a teacher?

Furthermore, the questioner should endeavour to ask questions in language familiar to those questioned. A question put in scientific language to a number of experts in a certain department of science would be entirely out of place in a Sunday-school composed of young people. So a question concerning some Christian doctrine or experience, familiar to mature Christians, might be foolishness to young pupils who would not understand the phraseology.

By observing these simple principles, and questioning himself after each lesson period, in order to ascertain whether he has put them into practice or not, by degrees the teacher will come to ask

questions that will be answered readily. As he goes on, his teaching will become more and more a delight.

The following suggestions are made for those wishing to perfect themselves :

1. Listen, whenever possible, to a master of the art of questioning.
2. Study the questions in the lesson help.
3. Occasionally write out questions to be asked.
4. Note the effect of questions asked by yourself on others.
5. Do not expect others to know what is in your mind.
6. Welcome all attempts at answering.
7. Accept wrong and imperfect answers and use them to lead up to correct ones.
8. Never blame any one but yourself for wrong answers to an ambiguous question, or to one that may be answered in many ways.

## XI

### ATTENTION

**I**N looking forward to meeting his class on Sunday, the interested teacher, who is interesting to his pupils, prayerfully prepares for accomplishing three things during the study hour, so far as those pupils are concerned. His first endeavour is to gain their attention. He next puts forth every effort to retain that attention throughout the study period. But his most difficult work is to turn that attention into interest. Of course, it is understood that this threefold endeavour is not for its own sake alone, but in order to make such an impression on the pupils that they will express in their daily living the truth taught. How is all this to be accomplished? is the question which we now seek to answer.

Without going into subtle distinctions, for our practical purposes, attention may be divided into two kinds, namely, compelled and attracted. Which of these is the better? It would be easy to answer the question, but let us see.

The superintendent of a Sunday-school once asked the writer to visit his school in order to criticize his methods. He overcame the objections offered by declaring that he would take kindly whatever criticism might be given, and endeavour to profit by it. So the would-be critic seated himself in the schoolroom a quarter of an hour before time for opening, with his note-book and pencil ready to jot down such things as he desired to call to the attention of the superintendent. On a table near him was a pile of Sunday-school papers, left there by the officers of a convention which had been held in the room the day before. A boy stepped up to the table, took a paper, went back

to his class, and in a few minutes about a third of the pupils present had supplied themselves with papers. The result was that when the superintendent came upon the platform to open the service, about half the school was engaged in reading papers. Looking round the room, the superintendent clapped very loudly, and for quite a time. Those who were in order continued so, those who were reading papers looked at the superintendent as long as the clapping continued, and then quietly went on with their reading. The good man had compelled their attention, which lasted just as long as the compulsion. When this compulsion was removed, and the readers had quiet to do as they pleased, they went on with that in which they were interested.

In that same city, a worker stood before a disorderly school. He said nothing, but put his hand into his pocket, took therefrom a number of coins, and in plain



view of the school, began to jingle them. This went on for about a minute, at the end of which time he had the attention of every one in the school, for all were asking themselves, "I wonder why he is doing that?" Selecting one of the coins, the man who had attracted attention quietly asked, "What is this?" The answer was given. Then he asked, "What is it worth?" and received the answer. This went on for about three minutes, by which time he had not only attracted, but secured the attention of those whom he wished to instruct, and was able to hold it for twenty minutes.

Which is the better? Is not the question already answered? The endeavour, then, should be to attract rather than compel attention, for attracted attention is more easily retained.

A few principles may be given from which rules may be deduced:

1. The unusual attracts. Therefore

the teacher should aim to be prepared at the beginning of each lesson to do or say something out of the ordinary, or to present something that is unusual.

2. The mind is appealed to much more quickly through the eye than through the ear. Therefore the man who jingled the coins in his hand had the advantage of the man who simply made noise with his hands, for the pupils, first attracted by the sound of the jingling, had their curiosity aroused, and wondered what was in the man's hand.

3. Attention is given to things that are worth while. Therefore the teacher should make it worth his pupils' while to pay attention.

Attention having been secured, the second endeavour is to retain that attention throughout the lesson period. This is done by variety in presenting the truth. If the same thing is done in the same way during many lessons it is no wonder that

the attention of those instructed flags, and the instructor has a very difficult time. A very successful teacher of boys and girls from ten to twelve years of age attributes much of her success to the fact that throughout the week she carefully prepares little surprises for the pupils, which she interjects into her lesson in such a way that they come at unexpected times. Another thought to be borne in mind in the effort to retain attention is that the best should not always be given first. Many teachers handicap themselves by beginning with a good introduction, or approach, and gradually giving that which is less interesting and attractive until there is little left towards the close of the lesson. The very best should be kept for the last. For that is not only the most important period of the lesson study, but the one during which it is hardest to retain the attention.

Finally, the endeavour should be to

turn attention into interest in the truths presented. It is of little value to have our pupils pay close attention throughout the study period, unless they are interested in what is being taught. This interest, as has been suggested, is for the purpose of having them live out the truths brought to their attention. How it is secured is discussed in the next chapter.

## XII

### INTEREST

**Y**EARS ago a lady, walking on the beach of one of our popular summer resorts, had her attention attracted by a group of persons some distance away. The group soon increased to a crowd. On inquiry, she learned that the body of a young man had just been rescued from the waves. Pressing forward to see if she might recognize him, she was startled to find that it was her own son. At once her attention was changed into interest, for she had been touched at a vital spot.

This incident will help answer the question: How may attention be turned into interest? Granted that the teacher has secured the attention of his pupils, and has retained it long enough to get

to the truth which he wishes to impress, interest in that truth will depend largely upon the way in which it touches those things which the pupils count dear. This is the general principle, the working out of which will depend on several important truths.

In the first place, the teacher must be acquainted with the every-day life of the pupils. This is such a trite saying that many instructors revolt against it, and clamour for something new. Notwithstanding its commonplaceness, it lies at the basis of all true teaching which has for its object the impartation of moral or spiritual truths. The teacher who does not know the every-day life of his pupil has no point of contact through which to interest him. (See chapter fourteen.)

In the second place, while the teacher knows that the truth has a vital bearing upon the life of the pupil, the latter may not recognize that fact ; hence the teacher

must be prepared to show the learner how the truth affects his life. This means that the instructor must be convinced of the value of the truth which he is trying to impart. He who speaks out of the fullness of experience speaks with a conviction which cannot be gainsaid. Even restless boys and girls are impressed by this conviction.

Again, the truth must be presented in language which the pupil understands, and on the plane of his experience. Otherwise the instructor will be to him as one who talks in an unknown tongue.

If to this is added a skillful use of those things which tend to attract, such as objects, and pictures, the attention is not only held, but interest is stimulated.

Now comes the chief question : How is the teacher to prepare for all this? As has been hinted before, the best preparation is to know the needs of the learner ; then comes that everlasting vigilance,

which is necessary to success in teaching. The teacher must have his eyes open to see, his ears unlocked to hear, and his heart sensitive to impressions, so that he will be constantly learning both what pupils of his class age need and how to interest them according to their needs.

Aside from this, there is for the Sunday-school teacher a help which the ordinary instructor does not make use of, namely : that which comes through the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. It is but reasonable to suppose that the Holy Spirit will be more willing to bless and help the one who does his best than the one who is ignorant and unskillful because of laziness. Hence, that form of assistance which comes in answer to prayer should never be overlooked, whether we are considering the question of getting our pupils interested in the lesson, or any other pedagogical theme.

An element very essential in creating



and maintaining the interest of the pupil in the truth to be taught is in the teacher himself. That which counts for most everywhere is personality. It is not the amount of information conveyed on any given subject that tells most ; it is the influence exerted through the personality of the instructor which, in the long run, produces the greatest fruitage. Therefore, the teacher of Bible truths should try to incarnate those truths in his own person. Children and youth are very quick to realize whether the teacher is absolutely sincere or the reverse ; whether he is talking perfunctorily, or trying to impress that which he believes to the inmost core of his being.

Another very effective aid in maintaining the interest of the pupil comes from the condition of the teacher at the time of presentation. Every teacher should strive for self-mastery. Restless boys and girls are often prayed for, that the

Lord would make them behave themselves ; the rebellious adolescent is frequently the subject of prayer. A fair question to be asked by every teacher is this : How much do I pray that I may be master of myself ? The masterful teacher is the successful one, provided that self-mastery does not degenerate into egotism. Hence, everything that tends to make the teacher lose control of himself should be tabooed. Nothing that would be helpful in giving the instructor mastery of himself should be looked upon as trifling or insignificant. The calm, quiet, forceful mastery of Jesus Christ had much to do in interesting the people of His time in the truths He taught. Even in our day, when the appeal is made to the intellect, men everywhere recognize Him as the masterful Teacher.

Finally, no opportunity should be neglected for increasing the knowledge of the teacher, for every item he gains adds

just so much to his power to interest his pupils. To his knowledge of the lesson should be added knowledge of Biblical truths in general, and of the Bible in its broad scope. While he is to teach but one main truth in each lesson, and prepares a very simple outline for teaching, the more he knows of that lesson as to its surroundings, facts, truths and deductions therefrom, the better is he able to interest his pupils. Is not this a high calling for the teacher? There is nothing that he possesses, physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual, that he cannot put into exercise in the endeavour to interest his pupils. Surely here is a field of culture not elsewhere surpassed.

### XIII

#### THE TEACHER TEACHING

**T**HE instructor who has put into practice the principles we have been considering will come to realize that the success of their application depends in a large degree on many seemingly unimportant details which are in reality of great importance. Here are a few suggestions put in very concrete form :

Before beginning to teach remove, as far as possible, all causes of distraction.

If possible attract attention rather than compel it.

Never begin a lesson without the attention of the class. (Make a practice of studying the faces of your pupils.)

When the attention flags, stop teaching until it is regained.

Rest the mind by variety.

By continual questioning, try to ascer-

tain whether there is real interest connected with the attention.

Do not continue teaching after interest in the subject taught has been lost.

"Little and often," is a very safe rule.

There are times even in the best class and with the most interesting subject, when, for no apparent reason, it seems impossible to secure attention. A careful study of such times, as a rule, proves that the cause for inattention is in the surroundings, in the pupil or in the instructor. Put Chrysostom in the pulpit, and let a cat make her toilet on one of the pulpit chairs, and the attention to the silver tongue of the orator will be as nothing compared with his auditors' interest in the actions of the cat. Hence, the importance of the first suggestion. Not only remove those things which will interfere with the attention of the pupils, but train yourself to be sensitively alive to anything that may be attracting the

attention of those whom you are trying to teach.

It is said that Mr. Moody always attended to the ventilation of the room in which he spoke, because he had learned that, notwithstanding his great power in presenting truth, he could not compete with bad air. Here is a hint for the teacher who complains of the apathy of her class and of the headache which comes on with such regularity on Sunday afternoons.

If the surroundings are as good as possible, the reason for lack of interest may be in the pupil. "Paul! Paul! what is the matter with you?" said a minister to his little boy. "Papa, I think I have Jesus in my heart, but the devil is in my stomach." One could scarcely expect such a boy to be very attentive to an ordinary Sunday-school lesson. Scolding will only cause increased irritation in such a case. The tactful teacher

will study his pupils in order to be able to remove, if possible, whatever causes inattention. Sometimes, for the sake of the other members of the class, a pupil may be requested to retire from the room until he and the cause of his inattention have settled matters.

As a rule, when there is continued inattention, the teacher should blame himself rather than the class. There are three lines of preparation necessary to the best teaching, viz., physical, intellectual and spiritual. Pupils are frequently blamed for inattention when the teacher's health is at fault. The intellectual preparation which comes from appreciating and living up to correct pedagogical principles is a great help in securing and retaining attention. Finally, communion with God, resulting in His power being manifest in the teacher, is the greatest help to effective teaching of spiritual truths.

John B. Gough was described by a German as "the man what talks mit his coat-tail." On one occasion, when he perceived that his audience was expecting too much of him, this great orator gained their attention by beginning his speech in a stammering, hesitating manner, then, when his hearers' attention was attracted from that which they expected to that which he was really saying, Gough used his marvellous powers to turn the attention gained into interest in what he was saying. This gives us the key to the law that underlies the securing of attention. Anything that is unusual or out of the ordinary will attract attention. The following are some of the simplest means by which attention may be gained :

By questions. (Nothing proves the skill of the teacher so much as his power to ask appropriate questions.)

By the use of the blackboard.

By pictures.



By the use of symbols or objects illustrating the truths to be taught.

By gestures or unusual motions.

By a sound. (A cough for example. The ringing of a bell belongs to the dark ages.)

By absolute silence.

Each organ of sense is a gateway to the mind, and whatever appeals to that organ in an unexpected way makes the mind attentive. However striking a method may have been when first introduced, it loses its power by too frequent repetitions.

Attention having been gained, how shall it be retained? There is one comprehensive answer to this question. By variety in presentation of the truth. Sunday-school teachers labour under the limitation that they are telling "The Old, Old Story." As a compensation for this, however, they may study the method of the world's greatest Teacher, who also

taught this story. A study of the discourses of Jesus will convince one that this story may be told in a great variety of ways. Here we may learn the methods of the Great Teacher, who spake as never man spake. In our study of methods do not let us neglect the Gospels.

A task still more difficult than the two just considered remains for the teacher: How shall attention be turned into interest? The answer is: By adapting the teaching to the age and the needs of the learner. The writer is well aware what a difficult task this is. In many respects the leader of the large class has the advantage, but here the advantage is all with the teacher of the small class. In the ratio that the teacher knows the truths to be taught and the lives of those whom he is to influence, will he be able to interest his pupil.

The very highest test of the teacher's success is to be sought for in the char-

acters and lives of those whom he instructs. There is a current saying to the effect: We must sow and leave the results with God. This is a delusive half-truth. The servant of Christ ought to sow, even when he sees no fruitage, but he ought also so to sow that he can reasonably expect fruitage. Truth is truth, but it should not always be scattered broadcast. There are times—and the more one knows one's pupils, the more frequent will those times come—when the worker should put the truth concretely so that the individuals before him will understand that it is meant for them. He should so present the truth that it must be absolutely resisted or else tell on the lives of the members of the class. He should endeavour by word and example to have the truth lived. The real test of the pupil's attention and interest should be the effect of the truth taught on his life. It has come to be

regarded as true that that which is worth having cannot, as a rule, be obtained without the expenditure of

**T**HOUGHT  
OIL  
TIME  
TALENT.

Let this be applied in the effort to gain and retain the attention of those instructed in the most precious of all truths. Be not discouraged, teacher, but think and think and think until you discover why it is that you lose the attention of your pupils. Then toil in your effort to overcome the difficulty. Consecrate whatever talent you may have to your endeavour, and do not be in too great haste, if you do not succeed at once. Recollect how patient the Lord has been with you, and be willing to labour on for a long time before you conclude that you cannot get and hold the attention of your class.

## XIV

### THE LESSON EXPRESSED IN LIFE

“**T**HE practice of righteousness ” is an expression which is gaining currency. It means simply that as distinguished from intellectual belief, or emotional perception of the truth, there should be an every-day righteous living. Righteousness is right doing; he who practices righteousness does what is right. It should be the teacher's aim to get his pupils to practice righteousness in their daily life. Hence, he who rises to a proper appreciation of his privilege as an instructor of the young in Biblical truths will not be satisfied unless those truths are so impressed upon the minds of his pupils that they will express them in action.

Reference has been made to the value

of the last five minutes of the lesson period. Here is where the teacher is to bring to bear the culminating force of all that has been put before the pupils during the period of lesson study. Here the instructor, who is looking for the right kind of fruitage, so puts the emphasis that those whom he instructs go away with the determination to live what they have been taught. It is, of course, taken for granted that the teacher will not always be successful in the accomplishment of his high aim. This, however, should not cause him to lower his ideal, or to be discouraged because he does not always attain unto it.

With the thought in mind that his great work is to inspire to the practice of righteousness, the teacher has a definite plan of lesson preparation, which plan has always in view the impression of some particular truth to be lived by the pupils. Everything that he does

during his time of preparing to teach is done with this purpose prominent. The various steps in the teaching process are but preliminary to the great climax of the last few minutes of the lesson study. How different, then, becomes his attitude towards the text selected for next Sunday's consideration? A few minutes on Saturday night or on Sunday morning will not be sufficient for preparation for him who has this great object in view. He first of all considers what his pupils need; he then endeavours to select from the text some one truth that will meet the needs of at least a portion of his class. Knowing just what this truth is, his illustrations will be arranged for the purpose of making it attractive. His various points of teaching will be for the purpose of emphasizing it. Everything that he prepares will bear upon this truth, whatever it may be.

As he goes to his class, prepared to

apply the various pedagogical principles which we have been considering, and with his lesson outlined in such a way that he can proceed step by step, he faces his pupils with the consciousness that he has something definite to impart, and that he is going to bend every energy to the accomplishment of what he has determined. Far different is this from the "happy-go-lucky" method of those teachers who read indiscriminately on the text, and go to the class with a mass of unrelated anecdotes and stories, with the thought that they are doing God's service if somehow or other they hold the attention of their pupils for half an hour on the Sabbath.

The Sunday-school session is over, but the teacher's work is not finished. He has still a twofold method of enforcing what is being taught. In the first place, he keeps a very careful watch over his life to see that he puts into practice the



things which he has been endeavouring to have his pupils do. He realizes that they are watching him, and that he is producing an effect upon their lives. In the second place, in his intercourse with the members of his class, he endeavours, wherever opportunity offers itself, to show how the truths taught in the class may be applied to daily life. One reason why so many turn from the Sunday-school is because they have never been led to see the relation between the truths taught therein and the needs of the daily routine. Hence, they have reached the conclusion that the Bible is an old-fashioned book, and that there is no vital connection between Christianity and this busy, everyday world.

Far different from this, however, is one of the results of the introduction of modern pedagogical principles into the Sunday-school. No secular educator is satisfied to-day with the mere acquisition of

knowledge on the part of his students. He wishes them to know in order that they may do. So the teacher of Biblical truths, inspired by the right motive, is not satisfied with his efforts unless that which he teaches issues in right living. Hence, while emphasis is put on a knowledge of the Bible, and especially of its truths, a greater emphasis is placed on the necessity of living those truths. In this way the Bible is no longer a dead book, but a manual replete with life which finds expression in ordinary affairs. The letter which kills has given place to the spirit which makes alive. In other words, the Bible is taught by one who has a proper conception of his office, for the purpose of enabling its students to live so as to glorify God and benefit their fellow men.

## XV

### A FIVEFOLD KNOWLEDGE

**M**ETHODS are of little value to him who has not power behind his method. "Knowledge is power," we are told. From the pedagogical standpoint this is especially true. Therefore, we present in a compact form various hints and suggestions offered in the foregoing pages. The Bible teacher's power will be conditioned largely by a quintuple knowledge :

1. *Knowledge of God.* The ultimate aim of Bible study should be to bring the student into harmony and communion with God. Therefore the one who is to lead others in this study must know God or fall short of being able to teach as he should. Imagine one striving to teach

music without knowing music! The Bible teacher must know God as He is revealed in the Word and as He reveals Himself to the one who loves Him. (See Psalm xxv. 14 and John xv. 15.) It is for the theologian to explain to us the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we press the statement that as a rule one cannot lead another to God without knowing Him. We are sometimes told that we are to be sign-posts pointing the way to heaven. Is this the whole truth in this connection? Undoubtedly God can use a sign-post, just as He once used an animal; but cannot He much more effectively use one who from a richness of experience can confidently declare, I know? Teacher, first of all, and above all, strive to know God and the reality of the unseen, spiritual truths which you are to teach.

2. *Knowledge of the Word.* The teacher should know:

*The Bible as a whole.* That is know it

as a book consisting of various parts closely related to one another and dealing with a common subject, viz. : Man's relation to God and to his fellow men. Chronology, geography, development of institutions may be profitably studied as well as the great fundamental truths which run through the entire book.

*The Bible in its various parts.* When? Where? By whom? To whom? Why written? are the questions that we are told should be asked concerning the various books. In addition to this, the teacher should strive to learn and to teach the connection of the book under consideration with the other parts of the whole.

*The lesson for the day.* No teacher, however much he may have studied, should rely upon general preparation. Every lesson should be especially studied, with the view of teaching it on the coming Lord's day.

*Especial truths applicable to individuals.*

A still more minute and especial study of each lesson should have for its object the selection of truths particularly applicable to those who are to be taught.

3. *Knowledge of himself.* "Know thyself," was a saying of which the ancient Greeks were very fond. The writer once had a night school teacher, concerning whom he thought, If I were a teacher I would take that man's actions as good examples of what a teacher ought to avoid. The man had great knowledge of facts, but he did not know himself. The result was that he was conceited, wrong in his judgment of others and, therefore, unjust to others. He lost his influence. His pupils treated him with contempt, and he was obliged to give up his class. If he is living to-day he is probably telling people what an awful set of boys he had to deal with. The trouble was he did not know himself. Teacher, if things are going wrong in your class,

study yourself, and you may learn that all the evil is not on the side of the pupil.

How may I study myself? is a natural question. A threefold method is recommended:

*Look into the mirror.* If I desire to find the condition of my face I look into the glass. The Word of God is the mirror where man may find his spiritual proto-graph.

*Ask the Holy Spirit to show you yourself.* This is a process of instruction from which we naturally shrink, but no one really comes to know himself without the help of the Spirit.

*Ask your friends.* Our friends perceive our oddities and idiosyncrasies to say nothing of our positive sins, but they shrink from reminding us of them for fear of giving offense. One of the best teachers with whom the writer is acquainted acknowledges that he is what he is, largely because he asked his friends to

show him his failings, and then resolutely tried to profit by what they said. Try it, teacher.

4. *Knowledge of his pupils.* I never really knew a boy that I once tried to instruct in spiritual truth until I had spent a part of a day in his home just after he and his mother had passed a night in the yard, while his drunken father sat in the place called home threatening to kill his wife and child if they dared to enter the house.

An evening's conversation by the fire in my home alone with one who was called "a queer stick" enabled me to know what kind of teaching he needed better than I would have known after a hundred interviews in the presence of others.

I thought I knew how to teach an elderly lady that I once had in my Bible class until I visited her, and she, locking the door of her room and putting the key into



her pocket, sat down between me and the door and told me about the people who were on the roof and at her window plotting to harm her. Then I began to realize that I had made a mistake when I imagined that the truths which I had been giving her were just what she needed. Perhaps the reader cannot learn as much about his class as he would like to. Let him not get discouraged, but try to learn concerning his pupil as much of the following as possible :

*His week-day surroundings.* Dr. Hurlbut urges the teacher to know his pupil's home, his companions, his reading, his recreations, his school life, and his street life. While it may not be possible for most teachers to compass all this knowledge of the pupil, he will make great advances when he resolves to know as much about these things as possible.

A lady was striving to show her boys that it was not right to "play crap" be-

cause it is gambling. "That's nothing," said one of her listeners; "my father made forty-eight dollars last Sunday gambling." That teacher knows more of her pupils' home surroundings than she did before.

*Of what is he thinking.*

*What he knows of spiritual truth.*

*What he does not know of that truth.*

Knowledge of these three points may be gained gradually during the teaching period and during those short talks which the wise teacher has with his pupils before and after the school session.

Bobby: Aunt Nellie, what became of the swine that had evil spirits cast into them, in the Bible?

Aunt Nellie: They plunged head foremost into the sea, Bobby.

Bobby (triumphantly): Not a bit of it, Auntie. They were made into devilled ham.

This newspaper squib is a fair indica-

tion of the way in which many of our youth think and speak about Biblical truths. A few questions by the teacher before beginning the explanation of a lesson might help in the process of clearing away the rubbish that has found lodgment in the pupils' minds and that prevents the entrance of truth.

5. *Knowledge of how to apply the truth.* The teaching of spiritual truth has been compared to the filling of bottles. If a liquid were thrown at a number of bottles, more or less would enter the bottles. So with teaching large numbers. Truth presented in a general way frequently finds lodgment in some hearts. The druggist, when he is filling bottles, carefully selects that which is intended for each bottle and fills that bottle by itself. The best teaching is when truth is selected for particular needs and applied to the individual.


The power gained by a knowledge of

the pupil as specified above is necessary in order to apply truth in this way. It should be the constant study of the teacher to learn how to apply general truth, so that the pupils may have good fundamental knowledge of spiritual things, and then how to apply specific truths to their individual needs.

The old story of the pious worker who gave a tract on "Dancing" to the one-legged man is not without its moral in this connection. There are those who declare, Truth is truth, and it makes little difference how or where it is stated. To learn the folly of such a statement one has but to study how Jesus—the Greatest Teacher—differed in His methods of presenting truth to the various individuals with whom He had to do.



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